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Roger Williams University School of Law

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April 19, 2017

Newsroom

Legal Achievers Honored at Commencement

A former Thurgood Marshall clerk will keynote 2017 Commencement exercises at RWU Law, when some 119 graduates will receive their J.D. degrees.

BRISTOL, R.I., April 19, 2017 – A groundbreaking Harvard Law professor and onetime clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall will keynote the 2017 Commencement exercises at Roger Williams University School of Law, when some 119 graduates will be awarded their J.D. degrees. The procession will begin at **1 p.m. on Friday, May 19**, on RWU's main athletic field at the law school's Bristol campus at One Old Ferry Road.

Professor David B. Wilkins of Harvard Law School, one of three luminaries who will receive honorary law degrees at the ceremony, is a leading voice on the diversification and changing nature of the legal profession.

"Professor Wilkins is a perfect commencement speaker," said **Michael J. Yelnosky, Dean of RWU Law**. "He is among the most influential legal academics studying and writing about the legal profession and lawyers. This law school is intentionally connected to the practice of law, and Professor Wilkins' presence will help us underscore that important characteristic."

Honorary degrees will also be awarded to **Janet L. Coit**, director of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; and **Professor Bruce I. Kogan**, a founding faculty member at RWU Law who has twice (in 1998-1999 and 2001-2003) served as Dean of Rhode Island's only law school, and is one of the state's leading experts on alternatives to litigation.

"I am very excited that the law school is able to honor three people whose work is so consonant with our values," Yelnosky said. "Director Coit has spent most of her career working to protect the environment, and sustainability – particularly of the marine environment – is a focus of our curriculum and of our Marine Affairs Institute. And Professor Kogan helped design a forward-looking curriculum that emphasized practical skills and public service when he helped found the school in 1993."

Added **RWU President Donald J. Farish**, "At Roger Williams University, we think it is particularly important to recognize those who have contributed to the public good and who reflect our institutional mission of strengthening society."